



Reimaginings

Volume 1
Issue 9 *Summer 2020*

Article 3

9-1-2020

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Recommended Citation

(2020) "In Their Own Voices: SCPS Graduates Tell Their Stories," *Reimaginings*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 9 , Article 3.
Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/reimaginings/vol1/iss9/3>

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In Their Own Voices: SCPS Graduates Tell Their Stories

Latonja Mohead Dotson (SCPS '20) celebrating her DePaul graduation.

Reimaginings reached out to three recent SCPS graduates to ask them to share their stories, journeys and how SCPS has changed them for the better.

LATONJA MOHEAD DOTSON (SCPS '20)

I was born and raised on the South Side of Chicago. I lived in a house with my mom, younger brother, grandmother and three uncles.

After graduating from Jones Metropolitan High School [now Jones College Prep], I went right to work in corporate America. I started my career at the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, a fair-housing organization, and later worked for Montgomery Ward.

Throughout this time, I was a single mom raising my son, who is now 13. He has childhood apraxia, a motor speech disorder that makes it difficult for him to speak. This meant that school was challenging for him, so I had to put extra time and attention into him. From a young age, I stressed the importance of education to him, but at a certain point, I realized that I wasn't living my own truth. So when I turned 40, I made a promise to myself: I'm going back to get my degree.

I searched for schools, and at the time SNL [now SCPS] was the right fit. Having been out of school for 22 years, I was scared. It was also hard because I was trying to find that balance between being a single parent, working full time and school. But I did it!

The DePaul experience just warms my heart. Going in was something that I was very afraid of, but the personal attention from my professors helped a lot and I learned so much from the curriculum. It took a lot of discipline and time management, but I was able to maintain it.

Currently, I work for ComEd as an administrative coordinator. To advance at ComEd, you have to have a degree. Thanks to my DePaul BA, I have been able to transition to the marketing department.

Graduating virtually was initially heartbreaking because I'm a first-generation college graduate and I was looking forward to my family being there to see me. I was also chosen to be a commencement speaker! But then I realized we still get to celebrate either way.

Now I'm pursuing the custom MBA program through the Kellstadt Graduate School of Business, focusing on marketing psychology. I plan on going into digital and brand marketing in the future.



RYAN ROWE (SCPS '20)

I'm from New York City originally, but moved to South Texas, which is where I graduated from high school in 2008.

Professionally, my background is in tech support. I worked as a heart monitor technician over the phone, and it was a pretty fun job—until it wasn't. I was like, "I want to change what I'm doing."

I lived in Lubbock for a little while, where I attended community college. When I moved to Chicago, I started looking around at different community colleges thinking I would then transfer to a university. But my girlfriend was accepted to DePaul for a PhD program, which sparked my interest in DePaul. SCPS's BA in computing, with a concentration in network technologies, was exactly in line with what I wanted to do.

One of my favorite classes was Active Citizens: Making a Difference in the Community, Workplace, World, an experiential-learning class that really opens your eyes to a lot of the injustices that are happening. For the class, I volunteered at a food bank. I could really relate to this because there was a brief period in my life when I was "couch-surfing" and had an unstable living situation. This class helped me grow as a person.

When I applied to SCPS, I did everything online. The only interaction I had with SCPS staff was through email. But I later worked as a receptionist at SCPS, and I saw firsthand how much advocacy on behalf of students goes on during the application process and throughout the program.

I feel confident about my job prospects. I have a lot of options because of how flexible what I studied can be. I can be an IT person, I can design networks for companies or I can maintain them. There are so many different routes.

ROSANNA (ROSY) CORDERO (SCPS '18, MA '20)

I grew up in Logan Square on Chicago's Northwest Side.

I have two brothers and a sister. My parents were both born in Puerto Rico and grew up in Chicago.

[During] my freshman year at Wilbur Wright College, I got pregnant and became a teen parent, which destroyed my dream of going to Northern Illinois University like my brothers. But my family has this talent for sales, and so I was able to get through by working, getting my associate degree and raising my children. (I later had another child.)

Eventually, I got into the mortgage industry, which enabled me to raise my children as a single mom and provide them with a nice lifestyle. My son is now 27, and my daughter is 21.



Rosanna Cordero (SCPS '18, MA '20) earned a bachelor's and master's from DePaul.

After the 2008 mortgage crisis, I worked in banking on the retail side and loved interacting with the people. But I took a major hit financially.

This was when I had my "aha!" moment and decided to go back to school. I applied to DePaul's SNL [now SCPS] program. I got an undergrad degree in liberal arts with a focus on global business leadership. So I was like, "Okay, what am I going to do with that?"

I realized I wanted to get my master's. I graduated on a Saturday, and I applied for my master's degree on the following Monday for the same program. I knew I wanted to do community work, but I also knew I had this cool background with mortgage, finance and banking.

I ended up creating workshops to teach youth about financial literacy. From my days in banking, I noticed there was a lot they did not know. That's when I decided to spread the word about how to use your bank account and how to build your credit.

At DePaul, I worked in the [Egan Center](#) office and had an internship as a school community organizer.

My DePaul experience was amazing. Something that I really love is the mentorship and the idea and application of the Vincentian mission, which really aligns with what I want to do.

I was recently accepted into the community psychology doctorate program at National Louis University.

Hopefully, by 2023, I'll be Dr. Cordero. I plan on becoming a community psychologist in a public health sector helping our youth.